



Privacy and Confidentiality in School Counseling

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Trust is an essential component in the development of helping relationships. Counselors regard the promise of confidentiality to be essential for the development of client trust. Most individuals seeking counseling services assume that what they divulge in counseling will be kept in confidence by their counselor, with limited exceptions (Glosoff, Herlihy, & Spence, 2000). This is most likely true for children and adolescents as well as adults. Managing confidentiality when counseling minors, however, is more complex than when counseling adults. School counselors must balance their ethical and legal responsibilities to their clients, clients' parents, and school systems. This complex balancing act is one reason that the topic of maintaining the confidences of student clients is raised in virtually every discussion of ethical and legal issues in school counseling. In attempting to weigh their legal and ethical obligations, it is helpful for school counselors to clearly identify those they consider to be "clients." School counselors are part of an educational community. As such, they consult with teachers, administrators, and parents. It is important for school counselors to clarify that their consultation is on behalf of students and that only the students are their clients (except if school counselors offer counseling to students' families).

The *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* of the American Counseling Association (ACA, 1995) and the *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 1998) are two resources available to help school counselors manage privacy and confidentiality in their counseling relation-

ships. School counselors can also look to moral principles or “shared beliefs or agreed-upon assumptions that guide the ethical reasoning of helping professionals” (Remley & Herlihy, 2001, p. 3) upon which the codes of ethics are based. The moral principles most often cited in relation to ethical practices of counselors include the following:

- Veracity or telling the truth
- Justice or fairness
- Nonmaleficence or doing no harm
- Beneficence or doing good
- Autonomy or respecting free choice
- Fidelity or keeping promises

The moral principle of *beneficence* refers to the responsibility to help clients gain something positive from engaging in counseling. It also includes counselors’ duty to “help society in general and people who are potential clients” (Welfel, 2002, p. 34). *Autonomy* refers to respecting the freedom of clients to choose their own directions and make their own choices within the counseling relationship. Respecting a clients’ autonomy does not mean that counselors encourage clients to make decisions independent of significant others (e.g., parents) in their lives or regardless of community and cultural implications. It does mean that “counselors refrain from imposing goals, avoid being judgmental, and are accepting of different values” (Herlihy & Corey, 1996, p. 4).

Applying moral principles to situations involved in respecting the rights of minor clients served in school settings is not always easy. To be effective advocates for their clients’ rights, school counselors must have a good grasp of issues related to the following concepts: the legal status of minors and the legality and ethics of privacy, confidentiality, privileged communication, and informed consent. Each of these are reviewed along with relevant ethical standards and factors that complicate school counselors’ ability to maintain a relationship based on students’ confidence that they can speak freely and without fear of disclosure. Finally, implications for the practice of school counselors is presented.

The Legal Status of Minors

The ACA (1995) *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* specifically references the term minor twice, both in relation to matters of consent. The *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (ASCA, 1998) include standards specific to counseling minors throughout the entire document. Neither set of ethical guidelines, however, defines the term minor. Typically, 18 is considered the legal age of majority, unless otherwise designated. Minors, there-

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fore, can legally be defined as those persons under the age of 18. Amendment XXVI (1971) to the U.S. Constitution established the right of 18-year-old citizens to vote and by extension has influenced the generally accepted age at which minors are extended other adult rights. For example, 18 is cited in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as the age at which the transfer of rights from parents to students occurs (FERPA, 1974). School counselors, therefore are faced with 18 as the age at which their clients are legally assumed to be mature, to have full ownership and control of their privacy rights.

The legal concept of the age of majority has implications for minor clients’ rights to make choices about entering into counseling as well as their rights to privacy and confidentiality.

Overall, although minor clients have “an ethical right to privacy and confidentiality in the counseling relationship...[the] privacy rights of minors legally belong to their parents or guardians” (Remley & Herlihy, 2001, p. 184). Isaacs and Stone (1999) noted that the Supreme Court has upheld parents’ legal right to make critical decisions about their children. (The term *parents* refers to all who function in the parental role and have the legal rights of parents.) Many people consider the decision to enter into counseling to be an example of a critical decision. Further, because counseling is considered to be a contractual relationship, “minors cannot *legally* agree to be counseled on their own” (Remley & Herlihy, p. 179). There are some exceptions to this. For example, many states have enacted laws allowing for individuals younger than 18 to receive counseling or medical services without parental consent. Additionally, most states have laws that allow minors to be declared “legally emancipated” from their parents and a few states allow for minors to be deemed a mature minor and capable of understanding the ramifications of counseling.

Legal Status and Informed Consent

Informed consent is both a legal and ethical principle requiring school counselors to adequately disclose to clients potential risks, benefits, and alternatives to proposed counseling. Minor clients, however, cannot legally give informed consent, only their parents can. Although the majority of clients served by school counselors cannot legally give informed consent, they can assent to counseling without parental consent. Some school districts or school principals have policies that require counselors to obtain parents’ permission before beginning counseling students, and others require coun-

selsors to seek permission if they see students for more than a specified number of counseling sessions (e.g., two or three). Unless there is school policy or a state or federal law to the contrary, Remley and Herlihy (2001) asserted that school counselors do not need parental permission before they provide counseling to students. According to Welfel (2002), many ethical scholars suggest that counselors obtain both the assent of minor clients and the informed consent of their parents, especially if they anticipate that there will be several counseling sessions. School counselors' obligations to uphold parental rights and attend to clients' ethical rights is discussed below in further detail in relation to confidentiality and informed consent.

Privacy and Confidentiality

The concepts of privacy and confidentiality are integrally related, especially in regard to the counseling relationship, privacy being broader in nature. Beauchamp and Childress (2001), in a widely acknowledged work on biomedical ethics, noted the importance of allowing those clients professionals attempt to help to limit and control access to information about themselves. They defined privacy as allowing individuals to limit access to information about themselves while defining confidentiality as allowing individuals to control access to information they have shared.

The Beauchamp and Childress (2001) definition of privacy includes decisions about sharing or withholding information about one's body or mind, one's thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and fantasies. Clients must share private information to form the trusting therapeutic relationship that is necessary for counseling to be successful. When individuals begin counseling they make decisions about the extent to which they are willing to share personal information with their counselors in order to gain the assistance they want. In part, they make these decisions based on their desire to be helped by their counselors and, in part, by their understanding of who might have access to the information they choose to share.

The issue of students' privacy rights is discussed so much and so often because there are no easy answers to the questions typically raised by school counselors who are concerned about students' ethical rights and the legal rights of parents. In fact, the topic is one often cited to demonstrate that conflicting legal and ethical obligations can create dilemmas for school counselors. Birdsall and Hubert (2000), writing about ethical issues in school counseling, observed that school counselors often inquire about issues they think are ethical when they are clearly linked to legal obligations. The source of the dilemma is easy to describe; however, a satisfactory resolution is elusive. Although ethically, minor clients have the same right to confidentiality as adults, they legally have no right to keep secrets from their parents.

Further, the parents of minors have a legal right, except for limited exceptions, to control the professional services provided their children and to be involved in planning those services. As noted previously, the ethics of all counseling-related professions recognize that clients have, again absent some limited exceptions, a right to privacy. Most counselors consider both of these rights, unless there is a conflict between them, to be reasonable. The fundamental conflict is between the privacy rights of minors and the right (some might add obligation) of parents to be actively involved in a counseling process that affects their children. This conflict most often arises in matters of confidentiality.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a professional's promise or contract to respect clients' privacy by not disclosing anything revealed during counseling except under agreed upon conditions. The moral principles of fidelity, nonmaleficence, and beneficence apply to clients' rights to confidentiality. In applying the moral principle of fidelity, school counselors make explicit and implicit promises to clients that they will actively work against disclosing clients' secrets, except under agreed upon conditions. Without this assurance, most students would be hesitant to seek the help they need to improve their mental health. Clients' trust in their counselors may be violated when information is communicated without their knowledge and permission, and when information, including details beyond what is minimally required, is communicated to third parties.

School counselors are expected to adhere to the moral principle of nonmaleficence when trying to make decisions about communicating confidential information. If counselors break their promise of confidentiality or disclose information without clients' consent, clients may feel betrayed. As a result, they may lose trust in their counselors and hold back other personal information or they may prematurely terminate the counseling relationship. These actions could cause harm to clients. The moral principle of beneficence raises interesting issues for school counselors. If students who would benefit from counseling learn that the school counselor shared information without client consent, they may not seek the very services they need. Likewise, community support for the school and school counseling may be diminished if parents believe school counselors withhold information vital to proper exercise of their parental duties.

School counselors do not give up their ethical obligation to apply the basic moral principles when counseling children and adolescents. However, they must apply these principles in developmentally appropriate ways and attempt to honor the rights of children and adolescents to make decisions while appropriately including their parents and school personnel. Relying simply on

chronological age as the basis of making decisions about when it is necessary to breach confidentiality does not make sense from a developmental perspective. For example, are clients, on the day they become 18, suddenly more capable than they were the day before to make decisions about their privacy? Based on developmental theories (e.g., Piaget), most counselors would assume that there is a stage at which the developing young person could understand the concept of secrets and could be involved in making informed decisions about confidentiality. Likewise, at some point in their development, most would view young people as, or almost as, mature as they will be at 18. A developmental approach, while more complex than a chronological approach, could be based on characteristics and abilities of the clients involved and the nature of their discussion with their counselors. "Generally, the more mature the minor, the greater the measure of confidentiality that young person is given in counseling" (Welfel, 2002, p. 102).

Research indicates that counselors implicitly endorse such a developmentally based approach to confidentiality rather than making decisions about sharing information with third parties based only on clients' chronological ages. For example, Isaacs and Stone (1999) received surveys from 627 school counselors in which they identified under what conditions they would divulge confidential information. Their research results indicate that elementary and middle school counselors would breach confidentiality more frequently than secondary school counselors. These results fit well with developmental theories that indicate younger children tend to be both less capable of making informed choices as well as less concerned about confidentiality than preadolescents and adolescents.

Limitations to Confidentiality

Regardless of clients' ages, there are times when school counselors may or must breach confidentiality. The *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (ASCA, 1998) and the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* (ACA, 1995) both specify that counselors are ethically required to take appropriate action if clients engage in behavior that presents clear and imminent danger to themselves or others. The idea that danger to self or others supersedes clients' rights to privacy and confidentiality is accepted in both the ethical standards and legal concepts that govern counseling practice. The concept is difficult to apply to adults when the ethical principles of autonomy and beneficence collide, but the complexity multiplies

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when counselors attempt to be faithful to promises to parents. What is a "danger"? As demonstrated by the Isaacs and Stone (1999) study, most counselors would agree parents need to be informed of drug experimentation by an 8-year-old. Many however, would disagree about whether to tell parents that a 16-year-old client reported "occasional" experimentation with marijuana. In making decisions about whether to disclose this information to parents, it is important for school counselors to recognize how their own values and beliefs may influence how dangerous they perceive students' behaviors to be. In addition, school counselors should assess the client's developmental capabilities as well as patterns of the behavior before deciding if something is dangerous. For example, in trying to determine the degree of

danger to the 16-year-old client who has experimented with marijuana, it seems important to ascertain what the client means by "experimental" and "occasional use" along with the client's intent to continue using marijuana. School counselors may be less likely to perceive the client who has tried marijuana twice, did not drive under the influence, and has decided that she dislikes it as being at risk as compared to the client who defines occasional as meaning she has been smoking marijuana at parties most weekends for the past 3 months and then driving home. The examples could continue but the only universal answer is that, in making decisions about whether the level of danger exhibited warrants sharing confidential information, school counselors need to know their state laws and the policies in the school jurisdiction. Finally, before making final decisions, school counselors are advised to consult with supervisors and colleagues.

In addition to danger to self or others, counselors must disclose confidential information if they suspect child abuse or neglect. Ethical standards and legal obligations coincide on this issue. Another typical exception to confidentiality is when school counselors receive a court order to testify or produce records in legal proceedings. In addition, ASCA (1998) directs counselors to respect parents' "rights and responsibilities ... for their children" (p. 2) and advises a counselor to make "reasonable efforts to honor the wishes of parents and guardians concerning information that he/she may share regarding the counselee" (p. 2). ASCA's *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* also include references to counselors' responsibilities to other school professionals such as faculty, staff, and administrators. For example Standard D. 1 specifies that the school counselor

“informs appropriate officials of conditions that may be potentially disruptive or damaging to the school’s mission, personnel, and property while honoring the confidentiality between the counselee and counselor” (ASCA, p. 3). Simply because student clients are in school situations, however, does not mean that all teachers and other school personnel have a legal basis to ask counselors to violate students’ requests for confidentiality.

When required to disclose confidential information without a client’s permission, school counselors are to reveal only “essential” information (ACA, 1995). For example, even during an individualized educational program meeting at which all participants have a general idea of a student’s counseling goals and how these relate to other academic goals, counselors will be expected to present information related to the student’s progress in meeting these goals but should not disclose specific details of their counseling sessions. Two good questions for counselors to ask themselves before sharing information about what a client divulged in counseling or about how they conceptualize a client’s issue are, “Do team members need to know this?” and “How will knowing this help the team make decisions that will facilitate the student’s educational progress?”

Privileged Communication

Counselors’ ethical obligation to maintain confidentiality does not allow them to disobey a court order to disclose information relevant to legal proceedings. In order to legally maintain the confidentiality of clients’ communications or counseling records in judicial proceedings, the communications or records must be protected by a legal privilege (Glosoff et al., 2000). Privileged communication allows clients to ask counselors to keep their communications and records of those communications confidential. Privilege belongs to the counselee and the counselor acts for the counselee in asserting privilege. Unless privilege exists or is granted, counselors can be compelled to disclose counseling notes and information given to them by clients or face contempt or court penalties. There are three common bases for privilege as it relates to professional counseling communications: (a) English Common Law as is the case for attorneys; (b) the constitution as is the case for those who decline to speak under oath for fear of self-incrimination; and (c) state statute as is the case for many licensed professional counselors.

The concept of privileged communication is contrary to the philosophy of rules of evidence in court proceedings. The legal requirement to reveal information in a court unless a privilege has been granted is grounded in evidentiary law established to allow courts to seek the truth. The traditional standard for privilege is that the communication originated in confidence, confidentiality was essential to the relationship, society wants to

foster the relationship, and the harm caused by breaking the trust would not be offset by the gain for justice (Wigmore, 1961). Professional groups such as physicians, attorneys, clergy, professional counselors, psychologists, and social workers have claimed that their relationships with their clients deserve privilege because they meet these criteria.

As of 2001, 45 states and the District of Columbia had professional counselor licensure or certification laws regulating the profession of counseling or the titles practicing counselors may and may not use in a jurisdiction. Glosoff et al. (2000) reported that 45 of the 46 jurisdictions also had statutes that granted privileged communication to the counselor-client relationship. School counselors should note the trend for state credentials that allow professionals that work in public schools to be called licenses rather than certificates. School counselors should avoid confusing the license to work in school with a license to practice outside of school settings. This distinction is important in those states that have statutes that specifically limit privilege to interactions between clients and licensed professional counselors. In some states, communications between clients and other categories of counselors such as substance abuse and school counselors are also privileged. Fischer and Sorenson (1996) noted that only 16 states grant statutory privilege directly to counselors who are certified or licensed by state boards of education to practice as school counselors. Given the variations in state privileged-communication statutes, it is important for school counselors to determine if the statutes in their state afford privilege to their clients.

The already complex issue of privileged communication for school counselors is made even more complex by the question of who has the privilege. Parents of minors rather than minor counselees are assumed to control the privilege if one exists. Counselors are sometimes subpoenaed for court appearances when the parents do not agree on whether the counselor’s testimony is desired and when a parental dispute over custody may be the heart of the legal proceeding. The resolution of such disputes between parents is the responsibility of the court. ACA and ASCA ethical standards recognize that school counselors may have limits to their ability to protect counselee confidences. The *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* specify “the professional school counselor respects the inherent rights and responsibilities of parents for their children ...” (ASCA, 1998, B.1.a.). In addition, the *Ethical Standards* refer to counselors’ obligations to follow both state laws and local guidelines (e.g., school board policies).

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) clearly establishes that parents control the privacy rights of students under the age of 18. School counselors are sometimes confused by a FERPA provision that allows confidential notes or memory aids to be

protected from FERPA's requirement that official school records be disclosed to parents. However, unless there is a specific privilege granted by statute or by a court, any material, including counselors' "confidential" case notes, can be subpoenaed. Counselors have no legal reason to refuse to testify or produce records if their counselee or the parents of a minor counselee request disclosure or waive their right to privilege.

Even in cases where communications between clients and counselors are not protected by statutory privilege or precedent, school counselors can appeal to the presiding judge to grant privilege. A statutory provision of privilege that must be overturned by the judge is a stronger position but a school counselor without statutory privilege could appeal to the judge on the basis of Wigmore's (1961) conditions. This means that the communication should have originated in confidence. Clients, or counselors on their behalf, cannot request privilege if a third person was present in the session. The logic and force of the 1966 Supreme Court *Jaffee v. Redmond* ruling can be an important part of a school counselor's request to a court for privilege (Remley, Herlihy, & Herlihy, 1997). The ruling supports the second Wigmore condition, that confidentiality is necessary for the counseling relationship. School counselors can also argue that society has sanctioned the counseling relationship through credentials for counselors and publicly supported counselor education programs. Finally, the *Jaffee* decision lends credence to the idea that the potential threat to justice posed by counselors' disclosure of confidential information does not outweigh the potential harm to the counseling relationship. Even if judges deny school counselors' request for privilege, counselors know they have done everything possible short of contempt of court to protect their counselee's confidences.

Informed Consent

With so many stipulations and exceptions to confidentiality and privilege, it is critical that school counselors engage in effective informed consent practices with their clients and significant adults. Informed consent, as an ethical principle, rests primarily on the moral principles of autonomy and fidelity, as described earlier. The principle of autonomy is consistent with counseling principles that require counselors to respect their clients as capable individuals who have the right to make choices regarding entering into counseling and being actively involved in the counseling process. Fidelity, in

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addition to the traditional definition of keeping promises, means that counselors create "a trusting and therapeutic climate in which people can search for their own solutions, and taking care not to deceive or exploit clients" (Herlihy & Corey, 1996, pp. 4-5).

Adherence to the moral principles of autonomy and fidelity fit well with the idea that clients have the right to actively participate in setting their goals for counseling and to make informed choices about the direction of their treatment. As noted previously, however, minor clients cannot legally give informed consent and, depending on their developmental functioning, may or may not be capable of understanding the risks and benefits of counseling or the limitations of confidentiality. Both ASCA and ACA indicate the importance of recognizing

parents as stakeholders in their children's counseling. It is critical for school counselors to be clear about the roles and functions of parents and other stakeholders such as teachers in the counseling process and how these roles influence the bounds of confidentiality. After all, how can clients make informed decisions about what information to reveal to a counselor if they do not understand the limits of their counselor's ability to maintain their secrets? But how can a student be encouraged to talk freely to a counselor if the session begins with a series of exceptions to confidentiality that may be perceived by the student as a warning rather than invitation?

One way to effectively approach the ethics of informed consent is to view it as an on-going process rather than trying to cover every possible consideration in the first session. In addition, tailoring informed consent practices to the developmental level of the clients is critical. For example, a simple statement such as, "Whatever you tell me will be just between us unless I am worried about your health or safety. Do you have any questions about that?" may be sufficient during the first session with a 7-year old client. If counseling a 15-year-old, however, it is probably more important to expand on this by discussing examples of conditions under which the counselor may need to disclose confidential information to the client's parents or to school personnel.

Implications for School Counselors

As stated earlier, the issue of confidentiality in school counseling is complex. School counselors have the ethical obligation to respect the privacy of minor clients and maintain confidentiality. This obligation is often in con-

flict with laws related to minors because parents have the right to know about most treatments and to decide what is in the best interest of their children. Counselors must also take into consideration codes of ethics, applicable statutes, and policies of their local education agencies and their individual schools. Given this type of balancing act, it is not surprising that school counselors often face ethical dilemmas related to maintaining the confidentiality of client information.

Prevention

The adage, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” is helpful to keep in mind in relation to prevention of ethical problems. School counselors’ anticipation of times when they may be faced with a possible need to breach clients’ confidentiality may actually prevent the breach from occurring. Even if counselors do need to breach confidentiality, if well prepared, a sense of anticipation along with strong informed consent practices may prevent or lessen negative consequences to the clients or trauma to the counseling relationship. Preparation can take many forms. For example, school counselors have a responsibility to stay up-to-date on their state laws and their local school district policies related to clients’ privacy. They can do this by attending professional development activities, requesting and reading policy manuals, and discussing these policies with their principals. If school policies conflict with the ACA (1995) or ASCA (1998) ethical standards, school counselors should discuss these with their principals and attempt to reconcile the policies with the ethical standards.

Counselors can also request that their school districts provide professional development workshops on current local and state policies and laws regarding confidentiality and their duty to protect students from danger (Isaacs & Stone, 1999). These professional development sessions should also include information on procedures to be followed when confidentiality must be breached. Isaacs and Stone noted that it is important for counselors to be aware of their own values regarding dangerous behaviors and how they believe age influences clients’ right to self-responsibility. They also maintained that it is helpful for counselors to have a network of peers with whom they can consult when difficult situations arise. When possible, counselors can broaden their own perspectives by including colleagues in their network who work at other school levels as well as those who work in nonschool settings.

Educating and Aligning with Stakeholders as a Form of Prevention

In trying to balance ethical and legal obligations to clients and parents, we believe it is helpful for school counselors to approach parents as allies or partners in the counseling process. There may be times when the

best interests of minor clients are served by including parents rather than trying to withhold information from them. The same holds true for dealing with other stakeholders such as other family members and school personnel. We are not, however, implying that counselors should automatically share confidential information with these stakeholders. Rather, we are suggesting that counselors acknowledge the likelihood that certain people will want information about student clients and to deal with this in a preventive manner by engaging in strong informed consent practices. Informed consent is an ongoing process that can begin before counseling ever does.

We recommend that school counselors routinely start the year by sending information to parents, teachers, and administrators about the role of the school counselor, the possible benefits of counseling, and the nature of both guidance and counseling activities. In addition to written materials, we suggest that counselors conduct in-service sessions with school personnel and present at PTA meetings so that stakeholders have an opportunity to ask questions and have concerns addressed. Educating stakeholders about the parameters of confidentiality when it is not related to any one specific child is a first step. It is also important to educate students through presentations in classrooms and assemblies. Of course, this should be followed by discussing relevant information with individual student clients and their parents once counseling begins. At that time, it is important for counselors, parents, and clients to come to an agreement about the parameters of confidentiality (e. g., the types of information that the counselor will and will not share with the parents).

When Conflicts Arise

Even when counselors are extremely diligent and effective in communicating information with all relevant parties about the parameters of confidentiality, there will be times when counselors perceive there is a conflict between their obligations to clients and obligations to parents or other stakeholders. For example, a parent requests information about the progress her son is making in counseling and asks for specific examples of things he has said in sessions. Rather than automatically assuming that the client does not want the parent to have this information, it is important for the counselor to talk with the student to determine what, if any, information he is willing to disclose or whether he is willing to give the counselor permission to disclose information to his parent. If a student client gives permission to share information with her or his parent, there is no conflict. What becomes problematic is when parents ask for information and counselors believe that it is not in the clients’ best interest to disclose such information, or when clients express that they do not want information disclosed. In these cases, we suggest that counselors

attempt to educate parents about the counseling process and how disclosing against the child's wishes may result in negative consequences.

In educating parents, it is also important for school counselors to assure parents that they will be informed if the counselor believes their child to be in harm's way. The determination of what is potential harm is not easy as the example of the marijuana smoking student presented earlier demonstrates. Once again, unless counselors have reasons to believe otherwise, we suggest they assume parents are asking for the information out of love and concern and to try to form alliances with parents. In our experiences, parents who are convinced that neither their interests nor those of their child will be well served by disclosure of specific information are often satisfied with a more general assessment or report (e.g., "I believe your son is working hard in our counseling sessions to make progress in the agreed upon goals. I wonder if you've noticed any improvement at home?").

If parents still want counselors to disclose information, we suggest that counselors schedule a session to meet with the parent(s) and client to facilitate a discussion between them. If clients are not willing to share information through this process and parents still insist, it may be necessary for counselors to tell their clients that, although it is against their wishes, the counselors will need to disclose information to the parents. To maintain the integrity of the counseling relationship, we suggest counselors do this before disclosing the information to the parents and then adhere to the standard of minimal disclosure by sharing only what is essential.

Summary of Suggestions for Safeguarding Clients' Privacy and Confidentiality

We wish we could give easy answers but we can only suggest that school counselors be vigilant and use the following measures to safeguard the privacy of their student clients:

1. Know the applicable ethical codes.
2. Know the applicable law in the jurisdiction.
3. Know the school system and building policies and procedures.
4. Refresh knowledge through professional reading and workshops.
5. Practice prevention through education and involvement of stakeholders.
6. Work diligently and specifically to make parents partners in the counseling process.
7. Remember the Three Cs: CONSULT – CONSULT – CONSULT. ■

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